

# CATO

## INSTITUTE

MEMORANDUM

**FROM:** Randal O'Toole  
**RE:** Response Inquiry 3  
**DATE:** September 15, 2020

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### Inquiry 3

Texas is one of 18 states that subsidizes an Amtrak train. This subsidy was questionable before the pandemic. Amtrak lost 95 percent of its riders in April and in July was still carrying only 19 percent as many riders as it carried in July 2019. As with transit, a complete long-term recovery seems unlikely as people will prefer their private automobiles over mass transportation, particularly considering the average trip by Amtrak is less than 200 miles long. Intercity passenger trains were obsolete before the pandemic and Texas should stop subsidizing them now.

Due to uncertainties about future travel patterns, Texas and other states should stop planning new transportation infrastructure and concentrate spending in the short term on improving maintenance of existing infrastructure. Post-pandemic transportation patterns may reveal new infrastructure needs in places that are very different from where infrastructure seemed to be needed before the pandemic. Until then, Texas should not commit future taxpayers to building and maintaining new infrastructure